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FOR SECRETARY AND AF FROM THE AMBASSADOR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [USUN](#) [SO](#) [ET](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - URGENT NEED FOR A UNPKO

REF: NAIROBI 2879

Classified By: Ambassador Michael Ranneberger.
Reasons: 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Summary: A decision to deploy a United Nations peacekeeping operation (UNPKO) in Somalia offers the best, and probably only, opportunity to preserve and advance the important and hard-won gains our policy has made in Somalia. Specifically, the Djibouti Process is making serious steps towards creation of a government of national unity. President Yusuf's December 29 resignation closes a chapter on Transitional Federal Government infighting, and opens prospects for further progress, but the imminent possibility of an Ethiopian withdrawal will create a power vacuum that the radical Islamist group al-Shabaab seems poised to capitalize on. Deployment of a PKO is vital to rehat and beef up AMISOM, allowing it to fill some of the security vacuum that will be created by Ethiopia's departure, and to create space for further progress in the Djibouti process. End summary.

¶2. (C) Transitional Federal Government (TFG) President Yusuf's December 29 resignation (reftel), while necessary to advance the Djibouti Process given the tensions among the TFG leadership, occurs against the backdrop of increasing al-Shabaab pressure and the possibly imminent departure of Ethiopian forces from Somalia.

¶3. (C) An Ethiopian departure could trigger the collapse of the fragile alliance between the TFG and moderates (now dubbed the ARS) from among its former Islamic Courts antagonists. This would be a tragedy given the quiet, but substantial progress that we have --in concert with the SRSG and others-- made through determined pursuit of the Djibouti Process. I believe it is essential that we take all possible steps to avert an implosion and preserve opportunities for our policy to bear fruit.

¶4. (C) A UNPKO that would allow for the re-hatting of AMISOM, and would give AMISOM troops the additional muscle they will need following an Ethiopian withdrawal, is key to allowing the Djibouti initiative to survive. Following the departure of Ethiopian troops and in the absence of a UNPKO, two scenarios seem likely:

-- the TFG will collapse, and in the ensuing chaos al-Shabaab and miscellaneous warlords and clans will vie for supremacy. That struggle for power would worsen the current humanitarian situation and further complicate the work of humanitarian NGOs in south-central Somalia. It would also open up expanded prospects for terrorist exploitation of this fragmentation.

-- The second and, I believe, more likely scenario is that the TFG will collapse, and the al-Shabaab will coalesce to seize power in Mogadishu and consolidate its power elsewhere. As it has elsewhere in Somalia where it has a firm grip on power, Al-Shabaab will introduce a very hard-line Islamic

regime -- more radical than the Islamic Courts Union reign that triggered the Ethiopian intervention in December 2006. The al-Shabaab regime would be sympathetic to terrorist elements that will pose a substantially greater threat to us and to the region.

15. (C) Deploying a UNPKO in concert with steps currently under way (including the financing and fielding of joint TFG - ARS security forces and the continued implementation of the Djibouti accords to include enlarging the Parliament and forming a government of national unity) by initially re-hatting and expanding AMISOM will preserve and enhance prospects for our policy to succeed in Somalia. Creation of a government of national unity, as envisaged in the Djibouti Process, will reinforce moderates and help marginalize the al-Shabaab, in the process paving the way for an eventual democratic transition.
RANNEBERGER